

Message Text

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S E C R E T ROME 2132

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, HU, VT

SUBJECT: FINAL OBSERVATIONS ON MINDSZENTY REMOVAL

REF: ROME 1808

1. DISCUSSIONS WITH RESPONSIBLE VATICAN OFFICIALS OVER LAST FEW DAYS HAVE CONFIRMED VIEWS REPORTED REFTEL. SOURCES CONVINCED THAT CARDINAL'S SECRETARY AND OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS ENTOURAGE INSPIRED FEB. 7 PUBLIC STATEMENT WHICH CAME AS TOTAL SURPRISE TO VATICAN. SECRETARIAT OF STATE OFFICIAL WHO CALLED MINDSZENTY'S OFFICE FOR AN EXPLANATION WAS INFORMED THAT CARDINAL FEARED PUBLIC OPINION WOULD MISTAKENLY BELIEVE HE HAD RESIGNED AND THAT STATEMENT WAS SIMPLY INTENDED TO SCOTCH SUCH MISUNDERSTANDING. VATICAN SEEMINGLY ACCEPTED THIS EXPLANATION AND HOPES MATTER IS NOW PUT TO REST. SOURCES ALL INSIST MINDSZENTY THOROUGHLY BRIEFED ABOUT STEPS VATICAN WOULD TAKE IN HUNGARY AND THAT, ALTHOUGH HE COULD NOT BRING HIMSELF TO RESIGN, HE AGREED TO ACCEPT SITUATION QUIETLY AND WITHOUT PROTEST. MINDSZENTY ALSO AGREED THAT LEKAI IS AN EXCELLENT MAN AND DEFINITELY PERSON MOST INDICATED TO FILL ESZTERGOM SEE.

2. ALL SOURCES CONFIRM THAT TERMS OF AGREEMENT HAD BEEN WORKED OUT LAST SPRING BY MSGR. CHELI AND THAT GOH HAD INITIALED

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WRITTEN MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING. THIS MEMORANDUM ALSO PER-

MITTS VATICAN TO NAME A NEW BISHOP FOR VAC, BUT HOLY SEE
HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO DECIDE ON CANDIDATE AT THIS TIME.
VATICAN FEELS SURE GOH WILL RAISE NO OBJECTIONS WHEN HOLY
SEE READY TO FILL VACANCY AT VAC.

3. SOURCES SAY MEMORANDUM ALSO COMMITS GOH "TO DISCUSSING WITH
AN EYE TO RESOLVING IN A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY MANNER" OUT-
STANDING PROBLEMS CONCERNING RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION, SEMINARIES
AND RELIGIOUS ORDERS. HOLY SEE FEELS THAT GOH OFFICIALS ARE
GENERALLY MEN OF HONOR WHO IN PAST HAVE MADE GOOD THEIR PROMISES.
NEVERTHELESS, SOURCES SEE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF SATISFACTORY
SOLUTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ISSUE SINCE HUNGARY, LIKE ALL
EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, HAS BEEN UNDER HEAVY SOVIET PRESSURE
SINCE LAST YEAR TO TIGHTEN UP ANTI-RELIGIOUS CAMPAIGN. VATICAN
BELIEVES THAT GOH COMPLYING IN ONLY PERFUNCTORY MANNER, BUT EVEN
THIS MAKES IT DIFFICULT GRANT CONCESSIONS ON RELIGIOUS EDUCA-
TION AT THIS TIME.

4. OUR SOURCES CONVINCED THAT MSGR. LEKAI WILL BE NEXT PRESIDENT
OF HUNGARIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE, REPLACING MSGR. IJJAS WHO WILL
PROBABLY COMPLETE HIS MANDATE NEXT YEAR. VATICAN CONSIDERS IJJAS
WEAKEST MEMBER OF HUNGARIAN HIERARCHY IN DEALING WITH GOH.

5. VATICAN BELIEVES MINDSZENTY MEMOIRS WILL BE PUBLISHED
SOME TIME IN MID-1974.

6. COMMENT: GIVEN POSSIBILITY OF MINDSZENTY DYING AT ANY
MOMENT, AND FACT THAT MOST EFFECTIVE VATICAN NEGOTIATOR, CHELI,
WAS OUT OF PICTURE, GENERAL ESTIMATE HERE SEEMS TO BE THAT
VATICAN STRUCK ABOUT BEST BARGAIN IT COULD HAVE AT THIS TIME
WITH GOH. MOST OBSERVERS, HOWEVER, PREFER TO RESERVE FINAL
JUDGMENT UNTIL THEY SEE HOW GOH PERFORMS IN FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS,
ESPECIALLY ON QUESTIONS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, SEMINARIES AND
RELIGIOUS ORDERS. VOLPE

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